



Media Note  
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## Remnants of War Cleared From Afghanistan's "Devil's Garden"

The last of the thousands of deadly landmines, unexploded and abandoned ordnance, and booby traps that infested former battlefields around Bagram, Afghanistan, have been successfully cleared, largely through the support of the [Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement](#) in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. The actual clearance of what was dubbed "the Devil's Garden" because it reputedly contained the most dangerous minefields in the world, was conducted by the HALO Trust, a non-governmental organization and Department of State grantee that specializes in the removal of explosive war debris, beginning in December 2001. As a result, over 72,000 refugees and many thousands of internally displaced Afghans have safely returned to their properties and farms in an area that was once a fiercely contested battle front. See related photos at [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/b/71588.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/pix/b/71588.htm).

Now, the former minefields and battlegrounds in Bagram, located in [Afghanistan's](#) fertile Shomali Valley, are again producing the delicious grapes and other fruits for which the region was once famous. Most of its inhabitants have rebuilt their homes, planted new crops, and repaired the canals and "karizes" (traditional underground irrigation channels) to water the area's soil. The "Devil's Garden" is no more.

The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement invested nearly \$5 million in this vital effort. Additional funding was generously provided by Roots of Peace, a non-governmental organization, and by Tracey and George Begley, American philanthropists, in Public-Private Partnerships with the Department. The United Kingdom, Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, and Norway also funded clearance in the Bagram area.

Rendering this area "mine impact free" was not without tragedy. Despite the HALO Trust's strict safety rules and meticulous procedures, two of its deminers were accidentally killed, proof of the fiendish way in which some of the mines were booby-trapped in order to hinder their clearance.

Beginning in 1988, the United States has steadfastly helped Afghanistan to clean up its landmines and other "hidden killers." Since 1993 alone, when the inter-agency U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program was established, the United States has invested nearly \$139 million to help Afghanistan develop its now-renowned national humanitarian mine action capacity, teach mine risk education, assist survivors of landmine and unexploded ordnance accidents, introduce new demining technologies such as the HSTAMIDS mine detector, and help Afghanistan to secure and destroy excess and abandoned arms and munitions.

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